

difference—really make a difference—they can impose real costs on those who fund the terror weapons of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

We know where their return address is. It is over in Tehran.

I have been proud to stand with Israel for years, and I am proud to stand with Israel today. The United States needs to stand foursquare behind our ally. President Biden must remain strong against the growing voices within his own party that create false equivalence between terrorist aggressors and a responsible state defending itself.

Israel deserves an opportunity to restore deterrence and to impose costs on terrorists the international community has been unwilling or unable to impose. There is a saying that has been around for quite a while: If Hamas laid down its weapons tomorrow, there would be no more fighting; if Israel laid down their weapons, there would be no more Israel.

So let's leave no doubt where America stands.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. On an entirely different matter, when the 117th Congress and President Biden were sworn in back in January, our Nation had already turned the corner in our battle with the coronavirus. New cases and deaths had already peaked and actually started to plummet. The vaccines, made available in record time thanks to Operation Warp Speed, had already started to roll out nationwide at a rate which the Biden administration inherited and sustained until April. The five bipartisan COVID packages that Congress passed in 2020 had the American economy packed with dry powder and primed for an epic comeback.

Economists across the spectrum agreed. One of President Obama's CEA chairmen said: "We have no historic parallel with anything like this level of excess saving." Larry Summers, another top Obama adviser and President Clinton's Treasury Secretary before that, said the bipartisan December package was already enough to elevate a measure of household income to "abnormally high levels, unheard of during an economic downturn." We were already adding back jobs.

But instead of tailoring another bill to build on this momentum, they pushed ahead with the \$2 trillion partisan plan that the far left wanted. Republicans predicted it would hurt our recovery if Washington kept taxing working people so the government could pay others a bonus to stay home. I stood here in February and quoted an expert who said:

In an expanding economy that is putting the virus behind it, paying people more in unemployment than they could receive from working is an act of substantial economic self-harm. It would keep workers on the sidelines, stop the unemployment rate from falling as rapidly as it otherwise would, and slow the overhaul recovery.

Well, we all knew what would happen, but Democrats insisted on continuing to pay people more not to work.

In April, as the President's policies took effect, we only added 266,000 jobs. That is nearly 800,000 under estimates, just as jobs openings soared to more than 8 million, the biggest number ever recorded. We are literally taxing the American workers who are back on the job for the sake of slowing down our economic recovery.

Instead of an agenda to reopen America, Democrats muscled through policies that would actually prolong parts of this crisis. And, of course, that is what happened. A record number of small businesses say they have open jobs they cannot fill.

Governors across America are having to take matters into their own hands and turn off these extra-generous benefits. In States like Arizona, Georgia, Montana, Ohio, and West Virginia, we have Governors having to clean up this mess, which at least one of their own Senators actually voted for.

The policies that we needed in March of 2020 are not the policies we need in May of 2021. That has been obvious to Republicans, to economists, and to the American people.

The sooner that my Democratic friends here in Washington can catch up, the better.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1260, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 58, S. 1260, a bill to establish a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation in the National Science Foundation, to establish a regional technology hub program, to require a strategy and report on economic security, science, research, innovation, manufacturing, and job creation, to establish a critical supply chain resiliency program, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, just 4 short months ago, hopes were running high in the Middle East. ISIS was wiped off the map, the Iranian regime and its terrorist proxies were in retreat, and Israel was forging historic peace deals with its neighbors. All along the way, the United States was instrumental in this progress.

But in just a few months, the Biden administration has dashed those hopes with its policy of weakness and appeasement. The forces of terror are again on the march. Pillars of smoke and fire are rising from Tel Aviv and the holy city of Jerusalem. The assault on Israel by terrorist groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad is the latest and most concrete evidence yet that the Middle East is spiraling toward chaos.

But instead of standing firm with Israel, the Biden administration's policy of endless accommodation is fanning the flames of conflict. The President should show strength. Instead, he is broadcasting indecision and weakness. Our greatest ally in the Middle East is under attack. Yet the Democratic Party refuses to say: We stand with Israel. The night sky over the Jewish State blazes with the starbursts of intercepted rockets, and the Biden administration only offers muted calls for restraint.

Where are the righteous denunciations of the terrorists responsible for these repeated, premeditated, and unprovoked attacks? Where are the statements of solidarity with Israel? Please. From this administration and from this Democratic Party, we can't even get the President's spokeswoman to say that the United States would help resupply munitions for Iron Dome, Israel's lifesaving missile defense system.

So this afternoon, let me provide a little clarity that the President and his party appear incapable or unwilling to articulate. The fault for the death and destruction in the streets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank lies not with the Israeli Government, much less with the Israeli people. The belligerents in this conflict aren't morally equivalent, the way it is often presented in supposedly enlightened circles. Put simply, there are good guys, and there are bad guys. Israel seeks peace. Terror groups seek death and destruction. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad are not legitimate state actors. They don't speak for the Palestinian people and don't truly care about them.

These groups are terrorist organizations run by evil men who commit evil acts in pursuit of the evil dreams of an evil ideology. They purposely fire waves of unguided rockets at civilian targets, while they protect themselves from reprisal using babies, hospitals, schools, and dupes in the media as shields—what cowards, attacking innocent civilians while they hide behind women.

Of course, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad don't act alone. The Palestinian Authority supports, encourages, and funds terrorism in the form of so-called martyr payments—pensions paid to terrorists who attack Jews. The PA perpetuates cycles of violence by refusing to acknowledge the existence of Israel, teaching anti-Semitism in its schools and leaving its people to wallow in poverty as wards of the international community.

And we all know who funds and arms Palestinian terrorist organizations, the world's foremost supporter of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran. For decades, Iran's theocrats have staged demonstrations where their fanatical supporters scream: "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." The assault on Israel today shows that those chants are not idle threats.

Iran's ayatollahs are deadly serious about wiping the Jewish State off the map. That is why Iran arms Palestinian terrorists with some of its most lethal weapons. Hamas's arsenal of 10,000 rockets might as well have "Made in Iran" stamped on the side.

Those are the villains of this conflict, but let's not forget the heroes. Standing courageously against this organized onslaught is the State of Israel, our closest ally in the region. Over the past week, terrorists have fired approximately 3,000 missiles and rockets into Israel. In response, Israel has defended itself with technological miracles like Iron Dome. It has carried out precision airstrikes against military targets, and, as always, Israel has gone to extraordinary lengths to minimize civilian casualties, despite the terrorists' best efforts to maximize and then publicize any carnage.

While Hamas and the Islamic Jihad fire indiscriminately from Palestinian schools, office buildings, and apartments, Israel responds by hitting those launch sites, but only after—only after—they warn civilians, allowing them to evacuate first. Regrettably, these warnings also allow terrorists to escape, but Israel bears that cost because it values innocent life, unlike its terrorist enemies.

You may have heard of one recent example. Last week, Israel carried out an airstrike against a building used by Hamas intelligence personnel, a building that also housed the Associated Press. An hour before the airstrike, the Israeli military called the AP and other civilians in that complex and warned them to depart. This precaution, once again, allowed Hamas terrorists to escape but also allowed reporters and other civilians to vacate the premises before the airstrike occurred. As a result, no civilians died, and Hamas lost a terrorist haven.

Now, in any other country and with any other military—except America's, I have to add—one would hear praise for that military's restraint and commitment to the laws of order. But because this military is the IDF and the country is Israel and the people are the

Jews, they are widely condemned around the world and on the left in America.

If you cut through the hysterics and the hyperbole, you can see the truth clearly: One side seeks to maximize carnage and the other seeks to minimize civilian casualties.

Besides, I must observe, why is the Associated Press sharing a building with Hamas? Surely, these intrepid reporters knew who their neighbors were. Did they knowingly allow themselves to be used as human shields by a U.S.-designated terrorist organization? Did AP pull its punches and decline to report for years on Hamas's misdeeds?

I submit that the AP has some uncomfortable questions to answer. Yet the AP and its fellow journalists are in high dudgeon about Israel's wholly appropriate airstrike. Leave it to whiny reporters to make themselves the story and the victim when terrorists are shooting missiles at innocent civilians.

In any event, the moral standing of the competing forces in this conflict is simple and clear. Our greatest ally and the only democracy in the region against an Islamist theocracy and its terrorist partners—most Americans know which side they are on. I speak for them when I say that we stand with Israel.

Unfortunately, too many elected Democrats have taken a different stand. Members of the so-called "Squad" in the House of Representatives have called Israel an apartheid state and accused it of war crimes. Remember, these aren't obscure backbenchers. Many Democrats herald these Representatives as the future of their party.

Meanwhile, 27 Democratic Senators have called for an immediate cease-fire to the conflict. Even the Democratic floor leader, who has long styled himself as Israel's great defender, has joined this moral equivalence, calling for immediate cease-fire.

Hear me clearly. The handwringing calls for a cease-fire are tantamount to Hamas propaganda. Both sides are not the same in this conflict, no matter what the Democrats naively imply. If Hamas puts down its weapons, there would be peace. If Israel puts down its weapons, there would be no Israel.

Thankfully, Israel's leadership is resolute, united, and committed to victory. The United States should respond to this terrorist onslaught with equal resolve. That means we should give Israel the time, space, and resources to destroy Hamas's war machine and protect its own people. We should also ensure that Israel has the military hardware to weather this crisis. Hamas may have as many as 10,000 missiles, rockets, and mortars in reserve. Meanwhile, Hezbollah lurks to the north with many times that arsenal. We should, therefore, endeavor to ensure that Israel has more interceptors for Iron Dome than Hamas has rockets to kill Israelis. Moreover, we ought to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority until

we can be absolutely sure that not a dime of taxpayer money is being used to buy and build rockets or pay pensions for murderous terrorists.

And, finally, the Biden administration ought to immediately end its misguided flirtation with the theocrats in Iran by recalling its chief negotiator and appeaser, Rob Malley, from negotiations in Vienna. If the Biden administration reenters the failed Iran nuclear agreement and grants sanctions relief to the regime in Tehran, in very short order that appeasement payoff will be converted into rockets aimed at Israel, as well as at American troops throughout the region.

While Israel is under attack, we have heard plenty of talk and mealy-mouthed statements from politicians. But in this moment of crisis, Israel needs more than words. Israel needs and deserves our full support to defend itself and its people and to achieve a just and lasting peace.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I spoke recently about how the President's "skinny" budget is disappointing, dangerous, and a disservice to our men and women in uniform. China actively seeks to outpace the U.S. military, and in some cases, they are succeeding. This isn't a 5- or 10-year problem; the threat is right now, today.

Unfortunately, the military is not the only area facing active challenges by China. Today, I am going to discuss a few at-risk areas that are critical to the stability of our Nation.

It is no secret that the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, wants to replace the United States as the world's top power. The American people need to be aware of how the Chinese Communist Party is coming after us, not just with missiles and military might but with plans to subdue the American spirit.

The repressive CCP uses economic espionage to advance its agenda to weaken our arsenal of democracy. A significant part of what has made the United States a global powerhouse is the strength and resilience of our private sector companies. Whether it is in the technology, healthcare, or energy sector, American innovation is unrivaled. It is what has made us the greatest economy in the history of the world.

China's leaders know this, but rather than go head-to-head in honest competition, they have settled for stealing our intellectual property. Chinese businesses, at the instruction of their government, lure American companies in. They offer cheap labor. They promise

an “exchange of ideas,” but they really want to steal our valuable intellectual property.

As President Trump’s Director of National Intelligence, John Ratcliffe, said, China’s strategy is to “rob, replicate and replace.” China robs American companies of their intellectual property, they replicate our technology, and then China replaces U.S. firms in the global marketplace.

This theft isn’t exclusive to just one industry. They will go after whatever they can to get their hands on it—wind turbines, airplane designs, underwater drones, chemicals, or artificial intelligence technology. According to the Department of Justice, between 2011 and 2018, more than 90 percent of the Department’s foreign economic espionage cases involved China.

By stealing this critical knowledge, the Chinese have given themselves a leg up on other nations. They are using it to expand their military and economic power. Their goal is to surpass the U.S. economy and gain monopoly control over every major industry. We cannot allow that to succeed.

Even more alarming is what China is doing from within our own universities. The American people may not be familiar with Confucius Institutes, but they should be. Confucius Institutes currently operate at 55 American colleges and universities. While they claim to harmlessly promote Chinese language and culture, they actually serve as a beachhead for the Chinese Government within America’s research institutions. Often, just the presence of a Confucius Institute on campus will enable Chinese officials to stifle any criticism of the Chinese Government at that university. The institutes also allow the Chinese Government to harvest valuable data from research being conducted at our country’s world-class institutions. Who knows what else they could be up to.

I was very proud to cosponsor Senator BLACKBURN’s Transparency for Confucius Institutes Act, which would provide needed transparency to these dangerous organizations. I was also glad to see Alabama A&M, a public land-grant and historically Black university, make the decision to close their Confucius Institute just last month.

Congress has made clear that American institutions of higher education that host Confucius Institutes could lose their Federal funding.

I hope any remaining colleges and universities with these CCP satellite organizations follow Alabama A&M’s leadership.

The United States and the entire Western World have given China valuable concessions for decades. We gave China a seat at the table thinking they would change, but they have played their hand ruthlessly. The hope was that by facilitating economic growth through open markets and giving them leadership roles in the international institutions, China’s Communist regime

would finally embrace democracy, human rights, and free market values. It is past time we recognize that despite all its good intentions, this strategy has failed and miserably.

The Chinese Communist Party has continually spied on its citizens, violently suppressed dissent, and systematically persecuted religious and ethnic minorities to the point of genocide.

President Trump stood up to China. He was the first U.S. President to do so in decades. And he made great strides, but he didn’t have enough time in office to finish the job. I sincerely hope President Biden will continue to build on the Trump administration’s momentum in pushing back against China’s aggressive rise.

The United States must address the challenges posed by China. I have shared a lot of concerns today, but I am not one to offer criticism without a commonsense solution. Here is one commonsense step Congress can take immediately.

The TSP, or Thrift Savings Plan, is the 401(k)-style investment plan that over 6 million Federal and government employees, both military and civilian, use for their retirement plan. The plan manages more than \$700 billion in assets.

Back in 2017, the Board that governs the TSP decided to invest billions in companies with direct ties to the Chinese Communist Party. They wanted to send government employee dollars—the retirement savings of our military and civilian public servants—to Chinese companies, including mine and everybody’s here in Congress. These companies are tied to a government that openly committed genocide against its own people. Well, with me, that dog doesn’t hunt.

Thankfully, President Trump put a stop to that plan before it was implemented, but now with President Biden in the White House, the Board could decide to push through this decision. We need congressional action to make President Trump’s decision with the thrift savings plan permanent. I bet if you ask the folks who work in these buildings or who served the United States overseas if they want their retirement savings going to Chinese companies, you would hear a loud no.

I will be offering a solution on this tomorrow to protect our national security and safeguard the retirements of those who have served our country with honor and distinction.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, over the past week, the Pales-

tinian terrorist organization Hamas has launched more than 3,000 rockets at civilian targets in Israel. Violent mobs have taken over the streets of Jerusalem, and even seasoned veterans of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have expressed shock at the intensity of the violence.

This isn’t normal. This isn’t the Middle East version of the Resistance. This is terrorism. Still, pro-Hamas activists have flooded the media with Instagram-friendly content condemning Israel for defending itself and questioning the legitimacy of Israel’s very existence, which is an argument that in any other context would bring all hell down on the person foolish enough to say it out loud.

The level of denial and misinformation about what is happening in Israel and why it is happening is appalling. Nearly every single member of the United Nations Security Council embarrassed themselves this weekend by embracing a generic draft statement condemning the violence but refusing to acknowledge the hundreds of Hamas rockets that started it.

The U.N. has a shameful history of ignoring threats and violence against Israel, but rarely in recent memory has the Security Council so blatantly regurgitated anti-Israel propaganda while Israeli civilians cower in fear under persistent rocket fire.

Thankfully, the U.S. mission blocked the statement’s release, but I think it is important—important—to inject a little reality into the ongoing discussion.

First, we must acknowledge that Israel has the absolute right to defend itself, no matter the state of their relations with the Palestinian Authority. There is a world of difference between a state-sponsored terrorist attack on a civilian population and action taken to stop that attack. We have a responsibility to counter the dangerous argument that because Hamas currently lacks the weapons capability to win this battle, Israel must stand by and allow terrorists to slaughter civilians.

Second, I would encourage all of my colleagues to join me in making it clear that the United States is and will remain Israel’s closest friend and ally. We will continue to assist with the development and production of advanced missile defense systems like the Iron Dome. We will not step away from that obligation simply because celebrity influencers would rather witness a slaughter than a proportionate response to mass terror.

Last, it is important to acknowledge that this violence is a symptom of a much more serious disease. Hamas terrorists may be the ones launching rockets at civilians, but it is Iran, the world’s leading state sponsor of terror, that is paying for it. That is right, Madam President—it is Iran, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, that is footing the bill for these attacks. When we provide assistance and support to Israel, we are not just

protecting an ally; we are containing the destructive influence of our most belligerent adversary in the Middle East.

This month, the Biden administration traveled to Vienna to negotiate sanctions relief with Iranian officials. Since then, President Biden has also spoken to Prime Minister Netanyahu and reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself from these attacks.

However, I would take this opportunity to remind my Democratic colleagues that the United States designated Hamas as a terrorist organization more than 20 years ago. That is right. For the past two decades, we have recognized Hamas as a terrorist organization. As a rule, we do not provide them assistance of any kind. They are a terrorist organization. But by opening the door to sanctions relief for Iran, we cannot help but enrich a regime that will not stop until it destroys Israel. That is their goal. We know it because they have told us that is their goal. We must not provide sanctions relief to Iran or give quarter to any regime that allies itself with this evil.

It is my hope that all Americans will take some time this week to just unplug and think about this and reflect and then pray—pray that reason and wisdom will prevail as we seek an end to this outbreak of violence and the defeat of this terrorist group that wants to destroy the nation of Israel.

TENNESSEE

Madam President, this weekend, we had a positive development in the status of the I-40 bridge that connects West Memphis, AR, and Memphis, TN. Just as a reminder, last week, inspectors discovered a crack in one of the steel beams supporting the bridge. The crossing was immediately closed to all vehicle and barge traffic. On Friday morning, the Coast Guard reopened the stretch of Mississippi River that runs under the bridge, but the bridge itself remains closed indefinitely.

Now, a lot of armchair experts have decided to sound off with the argument that this closure won't affect local economies, but with all due respect, those making this argument really should spend a little bit more time out in the real world. This part of Middle America that we are talking about is an incredibly important part of our Nation's domestic supply chain. We have a 15-mile stretch along the Mississippi River, and that houses 68 waterfront facilities. Thirty-seven of those facilities are terminal facilities moving products such as petroleum, tar, asphalt, cement, steel, coal, salt, fertilizers, rock and gravel, and grains.

Shipping companies and cross-country trucking companies depend on the I-40 crossing, and so do the local grocery stores, industrial facilities, restaurants, retail outlets that purchase the cargo, and, of course, our Nation's farmers.

Commercial trucking constitutes 25 percent of all traffic that crosses the I-

40 bridge. The river traffic that flows beneath the bridge is just as important. When the Coast Guard reopened that stretch of the Mississippi, they had to juggle 60 vessels hauling more than 1,000 barges. Yes. We had a little traffic jam in the Mississippi River.

It is amazing to me how quickly a problem like this does turn into a bottleneck. Tennessee and Arkansas transportation officials are still working out a timeline for repairs, but as of now, the trucking industry is preparing for a downward spiral.

According to the Arkansas Trucking Association, this could cost operators and their customers more than \$2 million a day, which is an amount that the industry actually cannot absorb. This means that the delay could end up costing consumers an additional \$2 million a day. And depending on what they are buying, they could also see empty shelves due to a supply chain interruption.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration is putting all their energy and focus into checking items off of a decades-old wish list of social programs. They put forward an infrastructure package worth more than \$2 trillion that wastes about two-thirds of this total pricetag on projects that have nothing to do with infrastructure, nothing to do with making sure that major bridges and thoroughfares are safe and open or expanding broadband access or making sure that parents in rural Tennessee can get their kids to school without worrying that a rainstorm will flood the road on the way to town. This is making the American people feel so incredibly unsettled and very frustrated, and Tennesseans are pretty nervous about the future.

If I could give the President one piece of advice, it would be this: If you want to waste time peddling Green New Deal policies or expanding social safety nets, admit it—just admit it. Call it what it is. Don't call it infrastructure and then turn around and throw pocket change at actual infrastructure problems that need to be addressed right now. That mislabeling makes it look like you are trying to pull a fast one over the American people, and it makes the American people believe that you really don't care. And that is a dangerous message to send in the middle of a traumatic pandemic recovery, especially considering that prices are already on the rise. We see it in utilities. We see it at the gas pump. We see it in the packaged snacks we purchase for the children's Sunday school class. Even basics in the produce section at the grocery store are beginning to get out of reach. It is affecting basic nutrition.

This is the Biden surcharge. We are paying a premium just to live from the moment our feet hit the floor in the morning to the time we brush our teeth and get into bed at night. The barebones cost of living is going up thanks to these reckless spending priorities.

My Democratic colleagues need to understand that a government subsidy cannot save a family from that kind of hit to their monthly budget, affecting everything from the moment their feet hit the floor in the morning to the time they brush their teeth and go to bed in the evening.

The Biden administration is creating a perfect storm of income insecurity, shortages, and the uneasiness that comes when Americans see more month at the end of their money than money at the end of the month.

They know how to manage their budget, and they know what they have to do when prices creep up 25 cents, \$1 or \$2 at a time. Their instinct isn't to reach out to the Federal Government for help; their instinct and their action is to cut back on the extras and to prepare for harder times ahead.

The only way to avoid this even now is to make prudent, targeted investments in economic recovery, supply chain security, cyber security, and, yes, actual real infrastructure projects.

The American people cannot afford all the extras that are on the Democratic Party's wish list. Their income can't keep up with the inflation that is hitting their pocketbook every single day of the week. And they really are concerned with what will happen when those trend lines cross and inflation heads north every single day.

I would, again, ask my Democratic colleagues to step back from the money printer and recognize the effect all this spending is having on American families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion for the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 58, S. 1260, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to finish my remarks prior to the upcoming vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about two issues of vital importance to the United States and the world.

First, I want to say a few words about the current violence paralyzing Israel and the Palestinian territories, but then I want to spend the bulk of my remarks on the future of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

First, here in America, our hearts are breaking for Israelis and Palestinians.

The images are just bone-chilling—rockets and interceptors streaking across the night sky, parents huddled with their children as air raid sirens ring out, tragic images of innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians, including children, injured or killed in the blasts.

For many Americans who are turning on the news this week, it might appear that the events of the last few days erupted almost overnight. While tensions are now reaching a fevered and deadly pitch, this cataclysm has been long in the making and no party, including the United States of America, has completely clean hands.

Zero-sum politics have driven both the decision making of the Netanyahu government and Palestinian leadership, to the extent that there is such a thing as Palestinian leadership. Those decisions have led us to this crisis.

Over and over, Prime Minister Netanyahu has pushed Israeli settlements further into territory historically considered reserved for a future Palestinian State. The Israeli Government, increasingly reliant on right-wing, zero-sum political constituencies for its survival, also stepped up campaigns to remove Palestinians from areas in East Jerusalem as a means to undermine the Palestinian claim to that section of the ancient city as the capital of a future state.

The spark that lit the match of the existing conflagration was the Israeli effort to remove Palestinian families from their homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah and replace them with Israeli settlers.

In February, the Israeli court ordered Palestinian families in that neighborhood to vacate their homes by May 2 or they would be forcibly removed. Protests began, spread to other cities in Israel with large Arab populations, while the Palestinian families awaited a final ruling from the Israeli Supreme Court.

As these protests spread and grew in size, Israeli police adopted some tactics that we have seen on display here in the United States—an overly securitized approach that only escalated rather than defused the tension. Those crackdowns led to more protests and more clashes and a cycle that continued and continued.

Then Israeli security forces stormed Islam's third holiest site in Jerusalem during Ramadan prayers. Now, the Israelis contend that they were responding to a rock thrown from Palestinians inside. The Palestinians argue it was the other way around. But whatever happened, at the end of that night, more than 330 Palestinians and 22 Israelis had been injured.

The story of the Palestinians' conduct over the last decade is just as important in understanding the roots of the existing crisis. Fatah, the main political party representing Palestinians, has failed the people it represents. Ripe with internal conflict and corruption, Fatah lost its mandate to govern Gaza

in 2006, when Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization, beat Fatah in parliamentary elections there that year.

Hamas refuses to recognize the right of Israel to exist and advocates for the armed rebellion of Palestinians against Israel. Fatah, under pressure from Hamas to take more extreme positions, spent most of the last decade refusing any and all chance to negotiate with the Israelis, preferring to sit on the sidelines and nurture grievances. They were unable to deliver any real economic benefit to the people under their charge in the West Bank, and the resulting desperation of Palestinians fed this grievance culture even more.

In response to those events I mentioned at Al Aqsa, Hamas and its allies in Gaza started firing rockets into southern and central Israel. Since that day, thousands of rockets have landed inside Israel. These rocket attacks were then responded to by an Israeli Government that has begun its own assault inside Gaza, and as we sit here today, hundreds of Palestinians inside Gaza, including children, have been killed. Although there have not been as many casualties in Israel because of the defense-security relationship with the United States, Israelis have been killed as well.

The Israelis were wrong to pursue settlements and evictions as a deliberate means to undermine a future Palestinian state. These policies might have helped hold together Netanyahu's political coalition, but they helped to feed a sense of hopelessness amongst Palestinians and their future.

The Palestinian leadership was wrong to perpetuate an anti-Israeli, anti-Semitic narrative as a foundation of their hold on power. They were wrong to choose grievance over diplomacy.

But the United States, over the last 4 years, played a role too. President Trump rejected America's historic role as a broker for peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. He chose a side unconditionally, and his alliance with Netanyahu and his rejection of a Palestinian state drove the two parties further apart and turned the temperature up. Trump pursued a path to intentionally create division rather than healing. Those 4 years of America's absence from its traditional post of mediator is also a big reason we are here today.

There is going to be time to talk about the big picture—to talk about what went wrong and how American policy needs to change toward Israel and the West Bank and Gaza—but right now, our focus needs to be laser-like on deescalation, on a cease-fire. Hamas must stop its rocket attacks. They are war crimes. They are indiscriminate. They do nothing to help the Palestinians in East Jerusalem or anywhere else. Israel needs to stand down its military campaign as well. They have to take off the table a ground invasion of Gaza. Israel possesses a dispropor-

tionate military power. That is why, during the 2014 invasion of Gaza, 2,000 Palestinians died compared with fewer than 100 Israelis. But when children die in Gaza, it does nothing to secure Israel. In fact, it does the opposite. It just provides further fuel to this furnace of grievances.

So I am glad that the administration is sending Deputy Assistant Secretary Amr to the region, that he is there. It is critical that we also get a formal U.S. Ambassador to Israel in place as quickly as possible. But the United States needs to be pressing for a cease-fire. The United States can't afford to simply allow for this escalation to continue. That is not in Israel's best interest, and that is not in America's best interest. My hope is, in the conversations that are happening today between the Biden administration and the Netanyahu government, that they are talking about the terms to bring this violence to an end.

Now, as to the second topic, I recently spent 5 days in the Middle East last week. I came back just before this recent spate of violence began in Gaza and Israel. During the 5 days I was in the Middle East, I crossed paths with a bunch of Biden officials who were making stops throughout the region, and I can report that, in setting aside the conflict in Israel—something that is pretty hard to do right now—there is some real positive news to bring back from the Gulf.

The 4-year-long rift between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors is healing. There is now a new diplomatic energy behind cease-fire talks in Yemen, and the Saudis and the Iranians are in direct talks for the first time in years. All of this—I was repeatedly told by leaders in the Middle East—is happening because President Biden has made clear that deescalation is going to be rewarded and supported by the United States—a stark departure from the Trump administration.

Now, this is good news, but the bad news quickly follows, and it is this: If the United States does not reenter the Iran nuclear agreement, all of this nascent progress is going to be at risk.

Joe Biden ran on a promise to reenter the Iran nuclear agreement. He made this commitment because he knew that this agreement was critical to American security. With Iran's nuclear program curtailed and inspectors allowed to comb every inch of the country to look for signs of a secret enrichment program, the world could breathe a sigh of relief in knowing that, for all of Iran's other malevolent behaviors and policies, at least we knew that they were not developing a nuclear weapon.

The achievement of the deal also brought together a set of really unlikely bedfellows—the United States and Europe but also Russia and China. On Iran policy, with this coalition of regular adversaries, it was intact at the end of the Obama administration. It was ready to be picked up by President Trump to confront Iran's ballistic

missile program or their support for regional proxy forces like Hezbollah, but Trump went in a different direction. Instead of building on the Iran deal, he decided to put to test the theory of its opponents. That theory is this: that if the United States imposed unilateral, crippling sanctions on Iran, leaders in Tehran would limp to the negotiating table, cowed and willing to put all of the issues—nuclear enrichment, missiles, human rights, proxy support—up for discussion. That is what Obama's critics said he should have done, and those critics cheered when Trump took their advice.

What happened, of course, was a policy cataclysm. Trump imposed the sanctions, and our partners, instead of following America's lead, effectively took the Iranian side, even helping Iran work around our sanctions. Making matters worse, when Trump sent word to the Iranians of our 12 demands, they refused to talk. Instead, they did the opposite. They ratcheted up their bad behavior. They sent more support to the Houthis in Yemen. They restarted dormant parts of their nuclear program, reducing their breakout time to a weapon from just over a year to just under 3 months, and they resumed attacks on American forces in the region, both directly and through proxies.

Here is a pretty simple way to take a look at the success of the maximum pressure campaign. One element of the Iran nuclear deal was a commitment by Iran to reduce their enriched uranium stockpile. You can see, in the years leading up to the deal, there is a dramatic escalation in the amount of enriched uranium the Iranians are holding. Then immediately upon the deal's being reached, it plummets. Yet here is the bad news: As soon as the maximum pressure campaign is unveiled by President Trump, those numbers start to creep back up again.

One chart explains to you the effect of Trump's maximum pressure campaign. It was a spectacular failure and definitive proof that the alternative approach, cheered by the Iran deal's opponents—keep the sanctions in place until Iran totally capitulates—was a fantasy. Instead, the situation has empowered the more hardline wing of an already hardline regime who is prepared to perpetually operate a resistance economy and blame the United States for the nation's suffering.

Yet now those same critics of the nuclear agreement are back, and incredibly, despite the writing inked on the wall during the past 4 years, their argument hasn't changed a bit. Just keep doing what Trump did, and this time it will work, they say. They suggest that getting back into the nuclear deal, as Biden pledged during the campaign, isn't enough. They want a new deal that includes a resolution to all of Iran's bad acts, but unless we are prepared to invade Iran and demand unconditional surrender—news flash: We are not—then that comprehensive,

soup-to-nuts deal is a neoconservative fantasy. It doesn't exist in real life.

In real life, the achievable result is a restart of the nuclear agreement. The good news is that this result in 2021 might have an even greater peace dividend than when it was executed the first time in 2015.

This brings me back to my trip to the region. I heard this story, while I was there, of how quickly talks on healing the Gulf Cooperation Council rift matured as soon as Biden won the election. Countries that were at one another's throats throughout the Trump administration were suddenly coming to terms with one another. While conflict and bullying and score-settling—Trump's calling cards—were rewarded during his term, countries quickly realized that diplomacy and deescalation would most quickly win favor with President Biden.

In Oman, I heard how the Saudis were suddenly much more willing to make additional concessions in Yemen and how the Houthis were now more likely to trust the United States as an interlocutor. In Jordan, the King talked to us about how an Iraqi Government was now more welcoming than ever of help from places other than Iran, and he spoke of Jordan's new overtures to a Baghdad Government in its looking for a more diverse set of allies. And everyone in the region, at every stop, buzzed about these talks, these dialogues, between the Saudis and the Iranians. Reports suggest that these two countries wanted to talk during the Trump administration but were discouraged from doing so.

This momentum toward peace is encouraging, but it is so fragile, and one major setback, one major, unexpected diplomatic hiccup, could turn all of this progress around. I worry that this hiccup could be the failure of America and Iran to get back into the nuclear agreement. If the talks fail and the Biden administration is forced to implement Trump's Iran policy for the next 4 years, complete with these unilateral crippling sanctions, it is easy to see how all of this progress in the Gulf could disintegrate. The so-called Iranian moderates would head back to Tehran with no deal and be defeated in the upcoming national elections. A harder line government, much less prone to diplomacy, would choose to scuttle peace talks in Yemen, end the outreach to the Saudis, and work like mad to make sure that their proxies in Iraq take power in the upcoming parliamentary elections. This could convince the Saudis to double down militarily in Yemen and open up new fissures in the Gulf.

Listen, maybe I am wrong. Maybe this is an overly apocalyptic vision of what would occur if the nuclear negotiations go south, but I fear that it is more accurate than fantastical that the stakes might be that high, which brings me, finally, to our negotiations in Vienna. If the consequences of success are so promising and if the rami-

fications of failure are so dire, then what has to happen to guarantee a good outcome? And I will end here.

First, the structure of the talks is deeply problematic, and that is the Iranians' fault. They are insisting on this shuttle diplomacy when we should be talking directly to them.

Second, countries in Iran's neighborhood that were hostile or neutral to the talks in 2015 suddenly have their eyes wide open to the benefits of getting back into the deal, so we should make sure that our partners in the Middle East who have the ear of the Iranian Government or the Supreme Leader are applying the appropriate pressure and letting Iran know that their relationships in the region are at risk if Iran fails to get back into the deal.

On our side of the ledger, we need to be willing to be creative. Now, of course, any restart of the nuclear agreement is going to require the United States to drop the sanctions Trump applied to Iran's economy—that had the same impact as the Obama-era nuclear sanctions.

Yet here is the point I want to make: What about the other sanctions that Trump layered on top of the economic sanctions? For example, it should be expected that the Iranians would want us to lift Trump's designation of its primary military force, the IRGC, as a terrorist organization. This wasn't strictly a nuclear sanction, but it was certainly a key part of Trump's maximum pressure campaign, and it was specifically designed to try to bring Iran back to the negotiating table on a nuclear program.

In evaluating the wisdom of peeling back these noneconomic sanctions, it is important to remember that they were all completely feckless. These sanctions had no impact. In fact, their only impact was to worsen Iran's behavior, so lifting them would have no practical negative impact.

Just as importantly, lifting this particular designation, the one example I am posing to you today, is a rather technical exercise under the U.S. statute, and it actually doesn't prevent us from sanctioning the truly bad actors in the Iranian military. For example, our sanctions on some of their most brutal interrogators—the IRGC's interrogators—would all stay in place even if we lifted that blanket IRGC designation.

This is just one example of a Trump-era sanction whose erasure would have little to no practical impact. There are many more, but I use this example to show how weighing the equities, the benefits, of getting into the deal are going to be far greater than the imaginary benefits of keeping many of Trump's noneconomic sanctions.

Now, let me be clear. If the sanctions like this are removed, opponents of the deal are going to cry bloody murder in that they are going to accuse Biden of giving more than Obama gave, but this is the exact trap that Trump was trying to set for his successor. He applied

sanctions on Iran in connection with the pullout of the nuclear deal, but he called them nonnuclear sanctions, hoping the next President would be caught in this sticky web. President Biden shouldn't be bound by Trump's tortured sanctions logic.

But, just as importantly, let me assure you that no matter the particulars or the details of the agreement to restart the nuclear deal, the deal critics are going to oppose it, no matter what. They opposed it in 2015. They are going to oppose it again.

What we should really be worried about is Trump's Iran policy becoming, by accident, permanent, and this is what is likely to occur if the Vienna talks fail. Iran will continue to speed up its nuclear research program, the maximum pressure will continue, and a chill will be delivered to the deescalation momentum in the region.

But on the other hand, reentering the deal, while effectively already priced into a Biden electoral victory, will be seen as a diplomatic victory, at a perfect time to score a win for diplomacy, and the Middle East countries who have found new affection for a U.S.-Iran agreement will exhale.

Now, I am not naive. I understand the Middle East has still dozens of intractable crises, and the events of the last few days in Israel and Gaza are a reminder of the grave challenges that are still there. But the overall mood of deescalation in and around the Gulf is real, and it is much better than the old incentive structure for escalation.

So I see these roots of positive change slowly, quietly growing, and, right now, the best way for the United States to nurture those grass shoots is to restart the Iran nuclear agreement. I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 58, S. 1260, a bill to establish a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation in the National Science Foundation, to establish a regional technology hub program, to require a strategy and report on economic security, science, research, innovation, manufacturing, and job creation, to establish a critical supply chain resiliency program, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Maria Cantwell, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Jeanne Shaheen, John Hickenlooper, Michael F. Bennet, Patty Murray, Tammy Baldwin, Raphael G. Warnock, Christopher Murphy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Jacky Rosen, Ben Ray Lujan, Richard J. Durbin, Tim Kaine, Jeff Merkley, Gary C. Peters, Catherine Cortez Masto.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 1260, a bill to establish a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation in the National Science Foundation, to establish a regional technology hub program, to require a strategy and report on economic security, science, research, innovation, manufacturing, and job creation, to establish a critical supply chain resiliency program, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 86, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 192 Leg.]

YEAS—86

Baldwin	Graham	Padilla
Bennet	Grassley	Peters
Blackburn	Hagerty	Portman
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Booker	Heinrich	Rosen
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Braun	Hirono	Rubio
Brown	Hoeven	Sanders
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schatz
Capito	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Carper	Kennedy	Shaheen
Casey	King	Sinema
Cassidy	Lankford	Smith
Collins	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Lujan	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Cramer	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Van Hollen
Daines	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warnock
Durbin	Moran	Warren
Ernst	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Fischer	Murray	Young
Gillibrand	Ossoff	

NAYS—11

Barrasso	Lee	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lummis	Shelby
Crapo	Paul	Tuberville
Johnson	Risch	

NOT VOTING—3

Klobuchar	Toomey	Wicker
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 86, the nays are 11.

Three-fifths of Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EL SALVADOR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to call attention to recent events in El Salvador which have caused international concern, including in the U.S. Congress.

I was a Senator in the 1980s, when social injustices and authoritarian regimes in El Salvador led to a brutal civil war that lasted 12 years. I traveled there during that period when the United States was supporting the Salvador Armed Forces, despite their history of corruption and collusion with death squads that carried out political assassinations with impunity.

Finally, in 1992, after tens of thousands of lives lost and atrocities including the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and six Jesuit priests and their housekeeper and her daughter by the Salvadoran Army, the two sides signed the Peace Accords that ended the war. Those Accords failed to solve the country's historical problems, and the leaders of the Arena and FMLN parties failed to put implementation of the Accords above their own corrupt, political ambitions, for which they ultimately lost the support of the Salvadoran people. But the Accords did establish the foundation for democracy, including a clear separation of powers with checks and balances as well as a limited constitutional role for the armed forces and the newly formed civilian police to avoid ever again being used for political purposes or repression.

I mention this history and the price in human suffering that was paid for the chance to build a peaceful, democratic society in El Salvador, at a time when key elements of the Peace Accords are under assault from within the government itself and President Nayib Bukele.

In February 2020, in a show of force designed to intimidate the Salvadoran Congress, which at that time his party did not control, President Bukele, accompanied by heavily armed soldiers, occupied the legislative chamber to demand passage of a law to pay for new equipment. Fifteen months later, after winning a supermajority in the Congress, he turned his attention to the judicial branch.

Under the Peace Accords, the Office of the Attorney General, formerly an appendage of the Executive that was used for repression and persecution of political opponents, became an independent institution, acting as a fourth branch of government and appointed by a majority of Congress to a 3-year term. Since the Congress is also elected for 3-year terms, every Congress gets to appoint an Attorney General. The President has no say in the matter.

The Attorney General can be removed by a majority of Congress for just cause and in accordance with due process. Attorney General Raul Melara's term was to end on January 6, 2022, just 7 months from now, and the newly elected Congress could have selected someone to replace him after